

Physical Education for Students With Disabilities

What is Adapted Physical Education?

Adapted physical education (APE) is physical education that is individualized and specially designed to address the needs of students with disabilities who require adaptations or modifications to be physically active, participate safely, and make progress toward Pennsylvania's Academic Standards for Health, Safety, and Physical Education. The need for APE is based on student assessment.

It is important to know that adapted physical education follows the same principle of least restrictive environment (LRE) as all other special education services. This means that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team should consider the full array of delivery options, beginning with participation in the general physical education class.

What Do Educators Need to Know?

- Physical education shall be adapted or specially designed if a student with a disability is not safe or not making progress toward Pennsylvania's Academic Standards for Health, Safety, and Physical Education in a general physical education class.
- Being successfully included in a general physical education class means that students with disabilities are educated with their typically-developing peers, have the support services they need, and are meeting or exceeding their own IEP goals or meeting or exceeding the class goals.
- During physical education class, students with disabilities should be physically active. The designation of students with disabilities as timers, scorers, line judges, and officials of games as their sole role in physical education is an inappropriate practice.
- "Adapted" physical education is the appropriate terminology to use when a student needs specially designed physical education, not "adaptive."
- Adapted physical education for students with disabilities is a direct service as part of the definition of special education according to IDEA. Adapted physical education is not a related service.

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